

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



DEFENDING HUMAN RIGHTS

17 May 2021

Senator the Hon. Marise Payne
Minister for Foreign Affairs
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

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Dear Minister Payne

RE: NINE PEOPLE PUT TO DEATH IN CHILLING RAMADAN EXECUTIONS

Amnesty International is deeply concerned by the Egyptian government's decision to go forward with the execution of nine people, including an 82-year-old man, on 26 April this year.

The ruthless determination exhibited by the Egyptian authorities in continuing to carry out these executions after a grossly unfair trial, even during the holy month of Ramadan, demonstrates a disturbing disregard for the right to life and obligations under international law.

I now write to urge you, in light of this horrific event, to keep up the pressure on Egypt to abolish the death penalty.

The victims of these executions were first subject to a trial in which defendants were denied access to their lawyers and were coerced to 'confess' to their involvement in the killing of 13 police officers during an attack on Kerdasa police station in August 2013. According to international law, proceedings in capital cases must scrupulously observe fair trial standards, and the evidence showing otherwise in this case evidences a significant violation of the right to life that must be clearly and resolutely condemned on the international stage.

The routine way in which Egyptian courts rely on torture-tainted 'confessions' to issue the death penalty is a particularly abhorrent practice, and a deliberate violation of international human rights legislation. December 2014 saw the Giza Criminal Court sentence 183 people to death in relation to this attack on Kerdasa police station. After the stern denouncement of this decision from nine Egyptian human rights organisations, all but 20 of these verdicts were overturned in a retrial in 2017. The decision to pursue this miscarriage of justice to its end saw three other men executed on 4 October 2020, followed by the nine people late last month.

Amnesty International's recently released **annual report on death sentences and executions for 2020** saw Egypt as the third most frequent executioner internationally (following China and Iran), with over 107 reported executions over the course of the year.

The number of recorded executions in Egypt tripled in 2020, demonstrating an alarming escalation in executions that cannot stand unopposed by the international community. The state-sanctioned execution of nine lives in April represents a chilling continuation of this surge.

I urge you to:

- Join the international community in publicly condemning Egypt's use of the death penalty,
- Urge the Egyptian authorities to immediately establish an official moratorium on executions, as a crucial first step toward abolition,
- Encourage the investigation and termination of unfair criminal proceedings that rely on coerced confessions and denied legal representation for defendants,
- And call for the abolition of the death penalty in Egypt once and for all.

I strongly encourage a swift and robust response to these executions, and the corresponding policies in violation of international human rights law, in order to support the immediate overhaul of criminal justice practices perpetuating the death penalty in Egypt.

For further information, or to discuss and organise a meeting, please contact Joel MacKay at joel.mackay@amnesty.org.au or 0424 242 112.

Yours sincerely,

Tim O'Connor
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